The Ancient Greeks

The ancient Greeks are in many important ways the founders of the modern world. It is true that their culture thrived thousands of years ago, but the ideas, [building designs](http://www.kidspast.com/world-history/0058-ancient-greeks.php) and governments that they founded anciently still exist in the Western World today. From sports to democracy, the Ancient Greeks will [continue](http://www.kidspast.com/world-history/0058-ancient-greeks.php) to influence the lives of billions of people for centuries to come.

A New Type of Religion

Many of the civilizations that existed prior to the Greeks believed in gods and goddesses that were terrible, mean, and most importantly, that were not human. Instead, these gods often took the form of animals, monsters and beasts. The people believed that mankind existed for the sole purpose of serving and pleasing the gods.

The Greeks had a new outlook on religion. They believed that the gods and mankind had a partnership with one another and that both existed to serve one another. They believed that their gods were human in form and that they exhibited human emotions, including jealously, love and hatred. Their gods married, had families, and even committed murder.

The only difference between mankind and the gods was that the gods had supernatural powers while mankind did not. Greek students were taught to strive to be the best individuals they could possibly be so that they could be more like the gods.

Each Greek city-state selected a patron god as their protector. This god was worshiped (in an effort to please them) so that their good favor would fall upon the people of that region. Every Greek citizen also worshipped the chief god, Zeus.

The Greeks believed that the twelve most important and most powerful gods lived on top of a mountain in northern Greece known as Mount Olympus. From this holy mountain, the people believed that the gods ruled and controlled all aspects of the natural world as well as all aspects of the lives of individual people.

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